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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

THE LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE, 1922

The success of the conference on local history work in Minnesota, with which the seventy-third annual meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society opened, indicates clearly that there is an increasing realization throughout the state of the importance of this field of activity. This implies a mounting interest which, in turn, is a necessary condition to the widespread cultivation of local history through definitely organized agencies.

In opening the discussion on the "Organization and Functions of Local Historical Societies and Their Relation to the State Society," Dr. Solon J. Buck first surveyed conditions in other states, especially in the East, pointing out that Massachusetts, for example, has approximately three hundred local historical societies. In Minnesota, on the other hand, there are but a meager handful. But the situation is by no means hopeless. With a basic interest to build upon, the desiderata are well-considered aims and definite plans. As a concrete suggestion to organizers in Minnesota localities, the speaker read a draft of a constitution for a county historical society.

Dr. Buck was followed by Dr. Orin G. Libby, who commented on the contrast between the situation in such eastern states as Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut and that in Minnesota and Wisconsin. In the East, for well-understood reasons, the starting-point has been organization in the locality; in the West it has usually been state organization. Deep-rooted local pride exists in the typical western community, however, and this sentiment must be capitalized. The post-war period, psychologically, is a favorable time for so doing. War-time organizations can be utilized and war records committees can be developed into local historical

societies. Historic spots must be marked. A vigorous advertising campaign by the central historical society, with the local organization acting as its representative in the locality, would go far toward making the work of the society better known and more effective throughout the state.

Mr. Paul S. Thompson of Minneapolis called attention to the records gathered by the Hennepin County War Records Commission. These are to be placed in the Minneapolis Public Library, indexed, and kept accessible. A card index to information about all men who have played a prominent part in a community like Minneapolis, Mr. Thompson believed, would serve both practical and historical uses. Teachers interested in the past of their communities, newspaper publicity, and truer conceptions of history were stressed by the speaker as important elements in forwarding worth-while local historical activity.

Minnesota is beginning to "get out of its swaddling clothes," said Mr. Samuel Lord of the Minnesota Tax Commission. In 1919 the Dodge County Old Settlers' Association departed from the usual and called upon every old resident to prepare a reminiscent paper. Some twenty-five or thirty responded and the collection of papers is to be bound and deposited with the Minnesota Historical Society. His own contribution, Mr. Lord said, was a book of reminiscences of Mantorville, designed especially for his children.

Mr. Frank M. Kaisersatt of Faribault spoke briefly of the situation in Rice County, describing the work of the local war records committee of which he is chairman; and Mr. Burt Eaton of Rochester urged the need of greater publicity, particularly with reference to the activities of the state society. People are genuinely interested in the history of their own communities, but this interest must be utilized and stimulated.

The last speaker of the morning session was Judge Lorin Cray of Mankato. He told of an ambitious plan of the Blue Earth County Historical Society to erect a fire-proof building

of its own on the courthouse grounds, to be "the property of the county and to be managed by the state historical society." The twenty-five thousand dollars necessary to build this structure could be raised without difficulty, he declared, but the county commissioners decline the honor of having the building adjacent to the courthouse.

The thoughtful and well-considered discussion at this session was proof that representative Minnesotans are seriously concerned about the status of local history. The value of local history is acknowledged. The need for organization is obvious. The advantages of affiliation with the state society are recognized. Local history activity is on the whole inconsiderable at present, but all signs indicate that the situation will soon improve.

The following document, which was presented by Dr. Buck at the conference described above, is printed in order to make available for organizers of local history activities a form of a constitution suitable for a county historical society. Article I should be of general interest for its definition of the objects of such an institution.

PROPOSED CONSTITUTION FOR A COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

I OBJECTS

The objects of the society shall be the discovery, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge about the history of ——— County and the state of Minnesota. More particularly its objects shall be:

I. To discover and collect any material which may help to establish or illustrate the history of the county or the state, their exploration, settlement, development, and activities in peace and in war, and their progress in population, wealth, education, arts, science, agriculture, manufactures, trade, and transportation — printed material such as histories, genealogies, biographies, descriptions, gazetteers, directories, newspapers, pamphlets, catalogues, circulars, handbills, programs, and posters; manuscript

material such as letters, diaries, journals, memoranda, reminiscences, rosters, service records, account books, charts, surveys, and field books; and museum material such as pictures, photographs, paintings, portraits, scenes, aboriginal relics, and material objects illustrative of life, conditions, events, and activities in the past or the present.

2. To provide for the preservation of such material and for its accessibility, as far as may be feasible, to all who wish to examine or study it; to coöperate with officials in insuring the preservation and accessibility of the records and archives of the county and of its cities, towns, villages, and institutions; and to bring about the preservation of historic buildings, monuments, and markers.

3. To disseminate historical information and arouse interest in the past by publishing historical material in the newspapers or otherwise; by holding meetings with addresses, lectures, papers, and discussion; and by marking historic buildings, sites, and trails.

II MEMBERSHIP

1. The society shall be composed of active and honorary members. Active members shall include life and annual members.

2. Any person interested in the history of ——— County may be enrolled as an active member upon receipt by the secretary of the first payment of dues.

3. The dues of annual members shall be fifty cents a year, payable in advance on the date of the annual meeting. The dues of life members shall be a single payment of fifteen dollars.

4. Members failing to pay their dues for one year after they become payable shall be dropped from the rolls one month after the mailing of a notice of such default.

5. Nonresidents of ——— County may, in recognition of achievements or for services rendered to the society, be elected honorary members by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any regular meeting. Honorary members shall not be required to pay dues; they may attend all meetings of the society, but they shall not have the right to vote unless they are also active members.

III GOVERNMENT

1. The officers of the society shall be a president, a vice president, a secretary, a treasurer, and one corresponding secretary for each township in the county.

2. The officers shall be elected by ballot at the annual meeting each year and shall hold office until their successors have been elected and shall have duly qualified. In case of a vacancy arising in any office it may be filled for the unexpired term at any meeting of the society.

3. There shall be a board of directors composed of the president, the vice president, the secretary, the treasurer, and three other members elected at the same time and in the same manner as the officers. This board shall manage the affairs of the society, subject to such regulations and restrictions as may be prescribed by the society.

IV DUTIES OF OFFICERS

1. The president shall preside at all meetings of the society and of the board of directors. In case the president is absent at any meeting, the vice president shall assume his duties.

2. The secretary shall keep the minutes of all meetings of the society and of the board of directors, keep a roll of the members, collect the dues and transmit them to the treasurer, conduct the correspondence of the society, give notice of all meetings, notify committees of their appointment, and make a report at the annual meeting upon the work of the society. He shall transmit a copy of this report, as adopted by the society, to the secretary of the Minnesota Historical Society not later than the first day of December in each year.

3. The treasurer shall have the custody of the dues of members and of all subscriptions and donations in money. He shall keep an account of the same and shall make a report thereof at the annual meeting and whenever required by the society or the board of directors. He shall pay out the moneys of the society only on the presentation of bills approved by the board of directors as attested by the secretary.

4. It shall be the duty of the corresponding secretaries to promote the interests of the society in their townships and to report

to the secretary from time to time such matters as may be of interest to the society.

V MEETINGS

1. The regular meetings of the society shall be held on the first Monday of each month, except the months of June, July, August, and September. The annual meeting shall be held on the first Monday in October. The board of directors may change the date of any meeting provided one week's notice be given to all the members.

2. Special meetings may be called by direction of the president at any time, and shall be called upon written request of ten members of the society or a majority of the board of directors.

3. Twelve active members of the society shall constitute a quorum.

4. The board of directors shall hold meetings as needed, upon call of the president or the secretary or any three members of the board, but at least once each quarter. Four members thereof shall constitute a quorum.

VI DISPOSITION OF COLLECTIONS

1. The society or the board of directors shall make provision for the custody of all material of historic value received by the society. Such material may, if desired, be given into the custody of a public library or any other agency or institution in _____ County. In case its preservation in the county is not specially desired it shall be tendered to the Minnesota Historical Society.

2. In consideration of assistance proffered by the Minnesota Historical Society in the prosecution of the work of this society, and because of the society's interest in the work of the state society, it is hereby provided that in case the society fails in three consecutive years to have a quorum at its annual meeting, which shall be interpreted as the cessation of an effective working organization, then all articles and things belonging to it shall become the property of the state society.

VII AFFILIATION WITH THE STATE SOCIETY

The society shall be enrolled as an annual institutional member of the Minnesota Historical Society, paying dues of two dollars

a year in advance, on July 1 of each year, and as such it shall, whenever feasible, send a delegate to represent it at the meetings of the state society, and shall make an annual report to the secretary thereof, as hereinbefore provided.

VIII AMENDMENT

Amendments to this constitution may be proposed in writing filed with the secretary by any three members. The secretary shall notify all members in writing of the proposed amendments and they may be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any regular meeting, provided two weeks shall have elapsed after the sending of the notice.